

time, we need to recognize that a 7-year extension is the longest extension we have ever had, and that alone I think should make us very proud of the work that was done, and it was bipartisan.

A lot of members of the Commerce Committee worked very hard on this issue. Senator CARPER certainly spent a lot of time on this issue. We haven't always agreed on every aspect of the legislation, but we can agree, and we have agreed, on this 7-year extension tonight.

I do want to make special mention of Senator INOUE, one of the Senators who was mentioned earlier as well. He is the chairman of the Commerce Committee. It was very frustrating to me that we never had a chance to vote on this legislation in the Commerce Committee, but he and his staff didn't stop working on the issue, and they put in a tremendous effort today to work through all of the details that are required. Even if it only takes the Senate 32 seconds to make a unanimous consent request to pass the final product, that 32 seconds has behind it hours and hours of work by many Members of the Senate and many more staff members. So I appreciate Senator INOUE's work and the work of the staff as well.

I am pleased we are sending this to the House tonight, but also pleased to note that we are doing it before the expiration of the current moratorium. The last extension was passed in 2004 and expires on November 1, or next Thursday. It is not that often, unfortunately, that Congress does something in a fairly timely way. So to pass this legislation tonight in advance of that expiration date adds a little bit more satisfaction, knowing we did the right thing, and that we did it on time. I am pleased to support the legislation.

I yield the floor.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, let me take one more minute on this subject to also extend my thanks and compliments to our staffs. On my staff, Bill Ghent and Chris Prendergast worked long and hard for many hours. Our Commerce Committee staff, both Democrat and Republican, did a terrific job under the leadership of Senator INOUE, and we are deeply grateful to him and to Senator STEVENS' staff for the wonderful work they did. The Commerce staff works in a way I wish every committee staff and subcommittee staff would—Democrat, Republican, majority, minority—it is almost seamless the way they approach almost every issue, including this one. I think one of the things that happens when you work like that is you get something done. While it is not unanimous acclaim for what we have done here, I think for the most part it is good work.

If we live to see what happens over in the House, hopefully we will be able to resolve our differences with them.

PASSENGER RAIL INVESTMENT AND IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2007—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. SANDERS). The Senator from Delaware.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, the bill before us is the Amtrak reauthorization bill. Each year it seems we find ourselves fighting increasing gridlock on our highways, whether it is Iowa, Delaware, New Hampshire, or Vermont. We face growing threats of smog in our skies, polluted air, crowded conditions at our Nation's airports, and financial challenges facing our aviation industry. If we don't broaden our investment in transportation infrastructure across our Nation, we are headed for a crisis.

Each year an outfit called the Texas Transportation Institute releases something they call the Urban Mobility Report. It continues to show traffic congestion growing across our Nation in cities of all sizes, consuming more hours of the day and affecting more travelers and shipments of goods than ever before. The annual financial cost of traffic congestion has ballooned. In 1982 it was about \$14 billion; today, \$78 billion. There is a personal cost as well—the time lost to traffic.

The same Urban Mobility Report quantifies this loss at 4.2 billion lost hours. That is not commuting time. This is just sitting in traffic not going anywhere, 4.2 billion lost hours and almost 3 billion gallons of wasted fuel. That is the equivalent on the one hand of 105 million weeks of people's lives and 58 fully loaded supertankers.

Rail remains the most underdeveloped opportunity to reshape our national transportation network. Rail can efficiently move large numbers of people over moderate distances, anywhere from 100 to 400 miles, and requires a smaller right-of-way than highways.

I would also point out that to move a ton of freight from Boston, Massachusetts, to Washington, DC, takes about 1 gallon of diesel fuel. So in a time and age when we are worried about the amount of oil we are importing, 1 gallon of diesel fuel can move a ton of freight from Boston to Washington.

But with respect to corridors, this is important in densely populated areas where there is not much land available to support new infrastructure, and the land that is available is mighty expensive.

States are starting to put their own funding toward rail corridor development as well. Several are using rail to relieve congestion at airports by investing in rail service in connection with their airports, much like we have at BWI, just north of here near Baltimore, much like we have at Newark, NJ, and other places. But what they are doing is using rail service to make a connection with airports as a substitute for the spoke portion of a hub-and-spoke air journey.

Early success stories include rail service between Boston Airport and Portland, ME, as well as increased

service from the Milwaukee Airport to the Chicago region.

More and more people are taking the train in our country, and there are a variety of reasons for that. Trains are convenient, they are comfortable, they are reliable. When you ride the train, you have bigger seats, you have more leg room. You can also use the phone and access the Internet. If you want a place that is quiet, you can go to the quiet car. If you want to eat, you can go to the dining car.

Amtrak used to have an ad campaign that said: "Amtrak: The Civilized Way to Travel." Compared to some of the adventures I have had in airplanes in the last year, it surely is the civilized way to travel.

When you arrive at your destination, in many cases the train station is in the center of town as it is here; as it is in Wilmington and Philadelphia, and as it is in New York City and a lot of other places as well. On-time performance is not great, but it is on par with the airlines nationwide. But in the Northeast corridor where some of us live, the train is even more reliable. The Acela Express has an on-time performance of almost 90 percent—not 100 percent but pretty darn good.

As a result, Amtrak ridership is starting to break records. In fiscal year 2007, a record-breaking 25.8 million people rode Amtrak. Total ticket revenues increased about 11 percent over fiscal year 2006 to some \$1.4 billion; still less than the cost of running the train, but still a hefty increase.

Ridership has increased across the Nation. The Acela Express has seen a 20-percent increase over last year and the Northeast corridor's regional trains are up as well. Outside of the Northeast corridor, interestingly, the Keystone Service train, the train between Harrisburg, PA, and Philadelphia and New York, experienced about a 21-percent increase in ridership; the Chicago-St. Louis corridor, 42 percent. California's Capitol Corridor, which is a train that runs from Auburn to San Jose, is up 15 percent, and the San Diego-San Luis Obispo Pacific Surfliner is up about 9 percent. I think what we need to do is to look at those corridors to see what is working and try to apply that to a whole lot of other Amtrak lines. What we do in this bill is just that.

The Passenger Rail Investment Improvement Act would require the Federal Railroad Administration to develop performance standards to evaluate the financial performance, on-time performance, and customer satisfaction of each Amtrak train.

Amtrak is then required to establish performance improvement plans for the five long-distance routes with their worst performance, including the worst financial performance. A year later, Amtrak must implement the plans and the Federal Railroad Administration may withhold funds for a route plan if the plan is not implemented. In future years, the remaining 10 long-distance

routes would undergo the same restructuring process.

Additionally, the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act would require the Federal Railroad Administration to analyze Amtrak's routes and consider changes that would require cost recovery and on-time performance as well as address the transportation needs of communities that are not served by any other form of public transportation.

I expect when we analyze these long-distance train routes, we will find the factors that make a train—or any form of travel—appealing to travelers is the frequency, the reliability, and the travel time of that service. In the case of many of these long-distance trains, the train may only run a few days a week or at odd hours. I remember the first time my family and I—my mom, my sister, and I ever caught a train, we lived in Beckley, WV. We caught a train in a little nearby town called Prince where the train stopped. We caught the train about 3 o'clock in the morning. I was about 5 or 6 years old. We caught it at 3 o'clock in the morning. In a lot of places around the country, we have trains that are stopping at 3 o'clock in the morning, 2 o'clock in the morning, 1 o'clock in the morning, 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. No wonder people don't want to ride those trains, especially when they show up about every 2 or 3 days. But on-time performance can be an issue because the tracks outside the Northeast corridor are not owned by Amtrak, they are owned by the railroad companies, and capacity on the freight rail lines is constrained by increasing demand to move more freight by rail. The freight is on the track. Amtrak sometimes gets in the way. The freight railroads want to move freight, not necessarily passengers. What this does is it indicates, to me at least, the need for additional investment in rail infrastructure—something we also address in this bill that is before us.

I think it is particularly remarkable how many States are investing in rail today when you consider the fact that the Federal Government provides no support. I learned when I served as Governor of Delaware that if we wanted to build in my State or to expand an airport, the Federal Government put up 80 percent of the funds—80 percent. The State would do 20. Building or expanding a highway or bridge in my State would also yield that same 80 percent support from the Federal Government. If we wanted to invest in transit, as we do, those funds were more competitive and hard to come by. The Federal Government would still pony up about 50 percent of the expense and the State would do the rest. But we wanted in my State to invest, and we do it smart, to invest in passenger rail, but that was the wisest investment for the dollar, for the buck. We got nothing from the Federal Government. The State had to put up 100 percent. Think about it. If you are the Governor of a

State or you are running a State and you can get matching funds for highways, you can get 80 percent on transit projects, 80 percent from the Federal Government for money on airports, but you can get zero for a city passenger rail service, which one would you vote for or choose? The answer I think is pretty obvious—not necessarily the right decision, the smartest decision, but oftentimes that is the decision that is made. It makes no sense.

So the Passenger Rail Investment Improvement Act bill changes that. It authorizes some \$1.7 billion over the life of this bill for a new State and capital grant program to support States that wish to provide new or improved inner city passenger rail. The Federal match is 80 percent—the same as highways, same as roads, same as airports. I believe this step will create a long-term, sustainable Federal funding mechanism for States investing in inner city passenger rail capacity, with the same kind of capital support we currently provide again for airports, highways, and transit.

Last Congress, the Senate passed the bill we have before us by a vote of 93 to 6. It was added as an amendment to an appropriations bill and passed 93 to 6. It died in conference. It was taken out, dropped. The Senate then overwhelmingly recognized the wisdom of our approach in bringing the Northeast corridor to a state of good repair, requiring reforms to the long-distance lines, allowing freight railroads to compete with Amtrak on their rail lines, the rail lines and the freights, and providing Federal support for capital rail investment, much as we do for highways, airports, and transit.

I urge my colleagues to show the same strong support for this bill when we reconvene next week so we can respond to our constituents' calls for more rail investment and more transportation options, especially where that makes sense.

Let me close, if I can, with this. Having served for 4 years on the Amtrak board, as Congressman, Senator, and Governor, being very much involved in the passenger rail service in my State and across the country, I am not interested in running trains for people who don't want to ride them. I don't think any of us are. I am not interested in the Federal Government providing inordinate subsidies for trains for folks who don't want to ride or for people who have other perfectly good options. If you think about it, in this country of ours, over half the people live within 50 miles of one of our coasts, over 50 percent of the people live 50 miles from one of our corridors. We have these densely populated corridors up and down the east coast, the gulf coast, the west coast. They were made to order for trains. Some of those long-distance trains make a lot of sense too.

A lot of businesses will pay good money, premium money for those trains. Folks will take a train south of here and go down to Orlando, put their

car behind them on the train or minivan or whatever, and they pay good money for those trains. They actually make money. What we have to do is to figure out how to work differently, to meet the need that is out there, to work smarter. The legislation that is before us will do that.

I know the hour is late and you have places to go and so do I. Let me yield back the floor and I thank you all for your patience.

Mr. SPECTER. Mr. President, I seek recognition to offer my support for the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007. This legislation authorizes Federal funds for Amtrak's capital and operating needs to maintain current operations, upgrade equipment, and return the Northeast corridor to a state of good repair.

Passenger rail is indispensable to our Nation's economy and quality of life. As our Nation's aviation and highway transportation systems become increasingly more unreliable or cost prohibitive due to flight delays, congestion, and rising fuel costs, a viable passenger rail alternative has become a vital component of the national transportation network. More travelers rely on Amtrak now than at any other point in the company's 36-year history. Not only is Amtrak an important option for travelers, but increased reliance on passenger rail has the potential to reduce our Nation's dependence on foreign oil and curb automobile emissions by attracting more would-be drivers into train cars.

This legislation would ensure the stability and solvency of our Nation's passenger rail transportation system, without which I believe we would be severely disadvantaged. In addition to authorizing a reliable stream of funding for Amtrak, the bill restructures Amtrak's debt to achieve savings, creates a new grant program for States to support rail improvement projects, and creates a new, bipartisan, nine-member Amtrak board of directors whose members must have either rail, transportation, or business background.

Additionally, I am pleased that the managers' package of amendments includes language which I sponsored requiring Amtrak to study and report to Congress on the infrastructure and equipment improvements necessary to achieve 2 hour and 30 minute Acela service from Washington, DC, to New York City and 3 hour and 15 minute Acela Service between New York City and Boston. The current trip times are 2 hours 45 minutes from New York City to Washington, DC, and 3 hours 30 minutes from New York City to Boston. I believe this study will provide a blueprint for the future of the Northeast corridor and will assist Amtrak in providing faster, more reliable service along this route.

Accordingly, as a longstanding supporter of Amtrak and a frequent passenger, I urge my colleagues to support this legislation.

Mr. INOUE. Mr. President, I fully support S. 294, a bill that will finally

reauthorize Amtrak and make important changes to secure a prosperous future for intercity passenger rail in the United States. In a year when Amtrak faces yet another crisis, in part due to the administration's proposal to severely reduce Amtrak funding in an effort to restructure the railroad through bankruptcy, this bill is all the more necessary. Additionally, congestion delays at our airports and on our roads are making more and more travelers dependent on passenger rail. We need to ensure that our national passenger rail system is adequately prepared to accommodate this increased ridership.

I congratulate Senator LAUTENBERG and Senator LOTT for crafting this important bill, of which I am a cosponsor. This bill encourages the development of new rail corridors, provides incentives for Amtrak to operate more efficiently, and strengthens the relationship between Amtrak and the States in which it operates. This bill will also provide more transparency into Amtrak's operations and help Amtrak better control its costs. I believe that it will further fortify Amtrak as an important, necessary, and viable option in the United States' transportation landscape.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that there now be a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

LABOR-HHS APPROPRIATIONS

Mr. MENENDEZ. Mr. President, I am in strong support of the fiscal year 2008 Labor, Health and Human Services appropriations bill. I thank the chairman of the Labor-HHS-Education Appropriations Subcommittee, Senator HARKIN, and the ranking member, Senator SPECTER, for their leadership in crafting this bill and ensuring some of our Nation's most critical priorities are adequately funded. I am proud that we have been able to negotiate a bipartisan appropriations bill that passed the Senate.

This bill is one of the most important funding bills that comes before us. It fulfills our responsibilities in key priorities, such as health care and education. With the passage of this legislation, we will be striking a significant departure from the administration's damaging trend of shortchanging our children, our schools, our workers, and our health. Instead of undermining education, abdicating our responsibilities on health care, weakening the rights of our workers, this bill will restore a commonsense balance to our values that we should expect from the greatest Nation in the world.

I would like to highlight a few areas in which this bill is especially success-

ful and contrast them to the administration's misguided priorities.

While the President's budget zeroed out funding for mentoring programs under the Safe and Drug Free Schools Act—a program that is critical to keeping our children safe and off the streets—I am proud that this bill not only restores that funding, but increases it by more than \$30 million.

As someone whose dreams of college could not have been realized without Pell grants and other Federal financial aid, I am pleased this bill follows through on the promise to increase Pell grants and restores funding for Perkins loans. These increases will mean that today's young people who come from families that cannot afford college on their own can still achieve their dreams. I know the power of this assistance. Without these programs, I would not have been the first in my family to graduate from college and law school. There are millions of students nationwide who are in the shoes I once was. They are waiting, hoping that there will be adequate financial aid to help them access college. And as tuition continues to increase, as grant aid under this president has shrunk, that challenge is getting anything but easier. In my home state of New Jersey, where the average tuition rose 7 percent since last year, 4-year public colleges are the second most expensive in the Nation. Our students need more, not less, grant aid if they are going to achieve their dreams. This bill sets us in the right direction.

Another program that is vital to students in New Jersey is vocational education. The vocational State grants are critical for the institutions in our state that are working to develop a workforce that is able to compete in today's global economy. New Jersey has some of the best vocational and technical education programs in the country. And while this President continually speaks about an educated and competitive workforce in the science, technology and math fields, he does not put his money where his mouth is. His budget would have cut vocational funding in half. Our bill restores those cuts.

This bill also restores cuts to education technology grants, which the President called for eliminating. These grants help ensure that our children have access to technology in the classroom. New Jersey alone would have lost \$5 million next year under the President's cuts. In the global race to have the most trained, highly skilled, best prepared workforce, we are losing ground. The earlier we can introduce our young people to technology, to help them gain fluency in areas that involve technology, the better off they will be in an evolving and increasing technological world.

I am also pleased this bill increases funding for special education by more than \$500 million. This funding is critical to ensuring children with disabilities have an equal opportunity to receive a good public education, just as other children.

And ensuring all children begin on an equal playing field means adequately funding Head Start, which this bill does. This legislation provides a \$200 million increase for Head Start, which will help improve the school readiness of our young children to ensure they can get the skills necessary to succeed. Head Start provides child development, education, health care, nutrition, and socialization skills, all essential services that benefit more than nearly 1 million low-income children in this country.

This bill also helps our young people by expanding opportunities for them to learn trade skills. It provides a \$15 million increase for YouthBuild, which helps young people learn constructing and housing skills and prepare for post-secondary training. This legislation also provides an increase of almost \$82 million for Job Corps to help strengthen these centers that provide key job skills to young people.

In addition, this bill will help veterans transition to civilian life by providing a \$5 million increase for employment and training services.

In terms of health care, this bill makes significant changes to the President's budget proposal and redefines our priorities as a Nation. Overall, the bill provides \$68.1 billion in discretionary appropriations for Health and Human Services Department programs. This amount is \$5 billion more than last year's level and \$5.4 billion more than the administration's budget request.

The bill provides \$250 million more for Community Health Centers and over \$200 million for the National Center of Minority Health and Health Disparities to address the health care needs of our Nation's minority and underserved communities.

This bill will also provide almost \$29.9 billion in funding for the National Institutes of Health, \$1.3 billion more than the Bush administration's budget request. The Centers for Disease Control would also receive \$6.4 billion under this bill which is \$444 million more than the administration's request. It is imperative that we continue to invest in our Nation's health and research facilities as their work will save and improve the lives of millions of Americans.

I am proud that this bill also provides \$8 million for the initial implementation of the Patient Navigator, Outreach, and Chronic Disease Prevention Act of 2005, which President Bush signed into law in 2005. I sponsored this legislation when I was in the House of Representatives in order to improve health outcomes by helping patients, including patients in underserved communities, to overcome barriers they face in getting early screening and appropriate followup treatment. This funding will help get people in to see a doctor before symptoms develop, so we can catch diseases such as cancer or diabetes early. Then we can get patients in to treatment early, which means